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ABSTRACT

Although prepared for the occasion of a national seminar in Thailand, the substance of this paper applied in a wide context of countries now making plans to develop school programs in population education. After an introduction to the need for introducing population education in the school curriculum and the way this need is perceived by family planning leaders and educators, the discussion is largely focused on two questions: 1) potential content and scope of population education; and, 2) strategies in developing a program. Content and scope are delineated by a few general statements, but the author suggests that each country will need to develop its own specification within the general dimension. Several steps in the development of strategies are listed and discussed: 1) determination of the scope and general objectives of the population education program (for Thailand); 2) establishment of an organizational unit or units responsible for providing leadership for the development of population education; 3) assessment of the personnel requirements; 4) development of a general plan of procedure; 5) development of arrangements for keeping informed about population education activities in other countries; and, 6) determination of financial resources needed and identification of sources of such support. (Author/JLB)

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A POPULATION EDUCATION PROGRAM IN THAILAND

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Within the past three years education leaders in many countries have held national seminars such as this one in Thailand to make plans for the development of population education in their countries. Among the countries which have taken this action are India, Indonesia, Philippines, Colombia, Chile and the United States. At least 18 countries have initiated some type of action in the development of population education programs. During this same period of time, Unesco has begun to develop a program in population education. A regional Unesco workshop for Southeast Asia was held in Bangkok in September, 1970 and a regional consultation for South America was held in Santiago, Chile shortly after that time.

This development of population education programs is a very special event in the history of education movements. Within a relatively short span of time, educators in a number of countries of different regions with quite different cultural histories have initiated action in this new curriculum area. These actions have been initiated in spite of the fact that no well developed model for this curriculum innovation was available. Another special feature of the development of population education is that the major advances are being made in the less developed countries. Very limited action is occurring in Europe and work has only recently begun in the United States.

Many factors have lead education leaders in these different countries to initiate population education programs. In the developing countries, the rapid decline of the death rate, and particularly the infant mortality rate, without a corresponding decline in the birth rate has resulted in a very rapid rate of increase in population. With the expansion in the numbers at the young age

levels, the prospect for even more rapid growth is built into the population structure. In addition, further reductions in the death rates may be expected in most countries with the consequence that the rate of growth will be further accelerated.

The result of the sharp decline in the death rate has been a rapid and sustained increase in population unparalleled in modern history. There is a tragic irony in this development. The sharp decline in the death rate represents successful attainment of new national goals in the provision of health services and this very success creates a situation which threatens the attainment of other important national goals. Even the maintenance and further extension of health services becomes a serious problem as more and more people are seeking service and at a higher level.

The awareness of the impact of rapid population growth on socio-economic development has lead many nations around the world to initiate programs to effect reduction in the rates of growth. The major docus of such programs has been the provision of family planning services to the potential conceptors, particularly those already interested in avoiding additional pregnancies. As programs have matured, efforts have been made to motivate other sectors of the population to adopt family planning.

National family planning leaders have also come to appreciate the long lead time necessary to effect significant changes in the rate of growth and have recognized the fact that each year a new cohort of young people move into the age of reproduction, adding to the potential population to be reached. This has lead some of these leaders to become interested in the development of school programs for young people as they are moving to adulthood. For the family planning specialist, this school program as well as programs for out-of-school youth is seen as a part of a comprehensive approach.

Bases for Educator's Interest in Population Education

Professional educators have become increasingly sensitive to the significance of population growth for two somewhat different reasons. Educational systems are particularly affected by rapid population growth since the absolute number and proportion of school age young people in the population increases even more rapidly than the other age levels. The aspirations to provide universal education and to extend the number of years in which young people stay in school is difficult enough to attain even if the base number to be served is stable. With rapid increases in this base, the problem becomes overwhelming. Education is already a major item in any national budget but increased proportions of the budget need to be allocated simply to maintain the same relative level of service to the eligible population. In a number of countries, the absolute numbers not being reached by the educational system has increased even though the number being served has increased significantly. One consequence is that on a world basis the absolute number of illiterates has increased by over 30,000,000 during the past decade in spite of enormous expansion of the education systems around the world. The professional goals of educators are made extremely difficult to attain because of the population factor and educators are increasingly aware of this fact.

The second reason that educators are expressing interest in the population phenomena is their interest in developing curricula which deal with the areas of human experience which are of great importance. When a problem is seen to be of such importance that a special national program is developed to meet it, as in Thailand, it is evident that the educators need to consider how they can give appropriate attention to the problem.

At this point it should be clear that the interests of the professional educator and those of the Family Planning leaders in population education may not fully coincide. Family planning programs are action programs involving

provisions of services, and the use of various means including mass media to encourage the people to take advantage of this service. Family planning leaders would like the various institutions of the society to act in such a way as to create a favorable climate of attitudes and opinions in support of family planning. Specifically, family planning leaders would like the schools to make their contribution to the objectives of family planning.

The professional educator on the other hand views his task as being different from that of an action agency. The function of the school system is to educate and any new program which the school system accepts must be in tune with this basic purpose. And therefore the educator is not likely to be interested in using the structure of the school system as a means to indoctrinate or propagandize or motivate students to a predetermined point of view.

Thus, both the professional educator and the family planning leader may be very much interested in the population problems and may find ways to work together in a cooperative fashion but the approach and contribution of each may be quite distinctive. One basic purpose of a conference such as this is to provide a setting in which the special problems and interests of the educator can be explored and a program plan developed which will fully recognize the special function of education in the society. In this sense the educators approach is to view the problem essentially as a proposal for curriculum change.

When a change in the curriculum content is being considered by professional educators, a series of basic questions must be raised including the following:

1. Why should the new content be considered for inclusion in the school curriculum?
2. What aspects of the full range of potential content of the new field are appropriate for a particular education system?

3. What changes in the existing features of the education system would have to be made to establish the new program or emphasis on a sound and continuing basis?
4. Are the expected outcomes from the changes commensurate with the investment of time, personnel and resources which would be required for successful introduction?
5. What is the series of steps which would need to be taken in order to introduce the change?
6. Are the resources and personnel needed to effect the change through the different stages of the introduction available or can they be made available?

The discussion which follows will be largely focussed on two of these six questions: the second question which is concerned with the possible content of a population education program and the fifth which deals with the strategies for introducing population education. The first question has been considered in part in the introductory section of the paper, and some aspects of the other questions will receive attention in the discussion of Question 5.

Scope of Population Education

The delineation of the potential content of a program of population education is a fundamental problem and presents some special problems for professional educators. Population education is an essentially new curriculum area which has emerged in the past six years and is used as a phrase to refer to all the various educational activities in the formal school system dealing directly or indirectly with population issues. The basic purpose of the educational activities is to aid young people in schools to understand the potential significance of population factors for their own lives and for the family, nation, and for the world in general and to develop values and attitudes based on this understanding.

Since the term population has been frequently used by educators to refer to an academic discipline usually taught at the university level in economics or sociology departments, it is understandable that many educators as well as others have assumed that population education is being used to mean either such advanced studies or an abridged and simplified form of such studies for use on the lower levels of the school system. This is an erroneous assumption.

It is true that population education must draw upon the concepts, methods, and findings of the academic discipline of population or demography. However, other academic disciplines such as economics, sociology, geography, ecology, biology, political science, and philosophy are sources of relevant concepts and findings. In this sense a comprehensive program of population education is interdisciplinary regardless of whether the appropriate attention is given within the current subject course in social and natural science or as separate units or courses.

In the very nature of the case, no definition of population education can be given which goes very far beyond the general statements above. Each country of necessity will need to develop its own program and, in this sense its own specification within the general dimensions. Each country faces the population issue in a somewhat different term, and each education system has its own specific educational goals within a general framework which it may share at least in part with other countries. Since the knowledge base regarding demography and other areas on which a program must be built is in a measure specific to that country the content of the program of each country will be different. Finally, the prevailing cultural values and national goals which set a framework for any educational system will also vary.

For the reasons cited above every population education program will be, to

a degree, specific to that country. Attention may be fruitfully given to the approaches used, in other countries, particularly those sharing common values and traditions. However the new curriculum area of population education differs from other curriculum innovations in that no well developed model exists which may be adapted for use in a particular country as has been the case for such fields as mathematics or physics.

In view of this definition of the problem it is assumed that the curriculum specialists who are responsible for the content of the school programs should work closely with the various specialists in demography, behavioral sciences, biologists, national planning, and family planning to work out the content which is appropriate for the school system. This will be considered again as the general steps for setting up a program are considered below.

Strategies for introducing Population Education

The second principal question to be considered here is that of the strategy which the professional educators and their colleagues in other Ministries will use in the development of a program in population education. It has been emphasized that population education should be considered as a curriculum innovation and that the strategies used for other innovations may be appropriate in this instance.

There are some special dimensions to this innovation which will need to be taken into account. This is a new field for school curriculum without good models available; it is potentially controversial; trained leadership for this field may not be available; it is interdisciplinary in content; and the integration of the content with existing subject areas at various grade levels may pose some difficult problems.

The convening of this national seminar is an important first step. It is to be hoped that educational leaders will become more informed about the population issue as it affects Thailand, will come to appreciate the potential value of a population education program for the young people of Thailand, and will give serious consideration to the formulations of a set of recommendations for implementation of a program.

In the development of the strategies to be followed in establishing a program of population education, a number of different steps will need to be taken. Some of these are listed below and are discussed briefly.

1. Determination of the scope and general objectives of the population education program for Thailand: A major first step in the development of a program is a preliminary formulation of the general educational objectives of the program. In an earlier section, a general framework for the consideration of objectives was briefly discussed. A more detailed discussion of possible goals may be found in my paper entitled "Issues and Problems in Introducing Population Education," and in the Unesco publication, Population and Family Education, which is a report on an Asian regional workshop held in Bangkok in September 1971.

The primary responsibility for the formulation of these objectives must rest with the Ministry of Education. Such objectives should be considered in the context of the general goals for education in Thailand and any program which is proposed must be pedagogically sound. Although the primary responsibility may rest with the Ministry of Education, the competence and experience of others should be fully recognized and utilized. This would include specialists from the Ministry of Health, public health education specialists, population experts, national planning specialists, behavioral scientists, natural scientists, and perhaps others.

The relationship of population education to other curriculum areas now included in the education system and other possible subjects not now included must be given serious attention. One issue which has arisen in a number of countries is the relationship of population education to such subjects as health education, family life education and sex education. When the subject of population education is first mentioned to some educators, the erroneous assumption is made that the term population education is a synonym for one of these subject areas. It should be clearly understood that population education has its own objectives, concepts and content just as each of these others has its own objectives and content. At some points, certain population education concepts and content may also be appropriate for other subject areas. The curriculum developers will need to take this into account as they build the program.

In some countries, specialists in health education, family life education or sex education have attempted to advance their own legitimate goals by associating themselves with the population education movement. Since this can lead to confusion in the minds of policy makers and the public, it is important that each of these subject areas be seen as a distinctive candidate for attention in the school curriculum.

2. Establishment of an organizational unit or units responsible for providing leadership for the development of population education: The location of the responsibility for population education in a special unit or units in the Ministry of Education is an important step in the development of an effective program. In India, such a unit was created in the National Council of Educational Research and Training and in the Philippines the unit was located in the Bureau of Public Instruction. In each of these instances, the staff members assigned to these units were experienced educational leaders who have

been asked to focus their attention on the various types of actions which need to be taken to organize and implement a program. They have utilized resources available in the universities and in other Ministries as well as, on occasion, specialists provided by Unesco and other international agencies and organizations.

A formally constituted advisory group to such a unit may be useful. This would insure that the experience and resources of the various Ministries and other agencies are readily available. In the Philippines, the Population Commission as an inter-departmental agency has in a measure served this purpose.

A problem which has arisen in a number of countries is the clarification of the role of the government agency responsible for family planning; usually the Ministry of Health, in reference to population education. The problem has arisen because in many instances the initial stimulus for population education has come from the family planning specialists. This has sometimes taken the form of initial program development through the school health education personnel who are located in the Ministry of Health.

When the Ministry of Education begins to take over the responsibility of developing a comprehensive program of population education, this means that the Ministry of Health has to reconsider its role. This may create some difficulty since the Ministry of Health may not find it easy to accept a new role. It is clear that the Ministry of Education should have the central responsibility for population education but it should seek effective ways to utilize such interest and expertise as may have been developed in the Ministry of Health.

3. Assessment of the personnel requirements for the development of a program: Since population education is a new subject area, competent personnel to provide leadership and technical expertise is likely to be a major problem. This problem is being met in most countries by identifying mature and experienced

educators within the educational system who are interested in developing competence in this new subject area. This does not necessarily mean that they need to embark on a long term training program. For staff members of this caliber, an in-service program can be worked out utilizing the resources within the country. Short term visits to several countries in the region may be useful. Foreign experts may also be called upon for short term consultation to assist in the training.

As the program develops, additional personnel needs will arise. In so far as the needs can be anticipated, special training programs within the country should be instituted. It is also likely that one to three months workshops on a regional basis will be sponsored in the years ahead by Unesco or other international agencies.

4. Development of a general plan of procedure: A long range master plan for establishing a population education program should be formulated relatively early. This will involve a number of decisions based on part of the general objectives referred to above and in part on prior experience in making curriculum innovations.

Two somewhat different approaches to curriculum innovation may be identified. In one approach, competent specialists in the central Ministry of Education, after careful study of a proposed change, assumes the responsibility of developing the new curriculum including the formulation of new syllabi and perhaps the new instructional materials required. These are submitted to the educational authorities for review. After review and revision, they are officially approved and become a part of the national educational program. Steps are then taken by the Ministry of Education to insure that this new curriculum is implemented. This may involve production of instructional materials, changes in the pre-service education of teachers and provision of in-service education for teachers and supervisors.

Over time, the field experience is evaluated and revisions are made in the curriculum at points deemed necessary. These revisions may be based on systematic research, on reports from supervisors or recommendations from conferences of teachers called for this purpose.

A second approach differs from the first in its reliance on pilot projects as a prelude to the general adoption of a new curriculum. In this approach, the new curriculum is developed by specialists and tested out in carefully selected settings. Teachers in these schools receive whatever special training is judged to be needed and the results of the pilot study are assessed. If the pilot project seems to be generally successful, the minor changes indicated are made, and the curriculum innovation is then adopted for implementation on a national basis. If the pilot project proved to be unsuccessful, a new set of pilot projects might be carried out before the new curriculum is accepted for use on a national basis.

A decision as to which of these two approaches, or perhaps some other approach, is crucial since assignment of personnel and the allocation of resources depend on the approach which is used. Past experience in introducing innovations may be a useful guide but the special character of this innovation should be taken into account.

Some decision needs to be reached at an early stage as to the role which research is to play in the general plan. There are potentially four types of research problems to be considered. In each instance, the researcher may collect and interpret research already done or may want to initiate new research.

One problem is basic research into cultural practices and values related to population. This may deal with such questions as the cultural meaning of size of family, values associated with male and female children, proper age of marriage, and values associated with rate of growth of villages and of the nation.

Another problem area for further research is the area of population dynamics. An assessment of the adequacy of the knowledge base relevant for the school curriculum needs to be made so that the gaps can be filled.

A third problem area is the current state of knowledge and attitudes held by students and teachers. As in any curriculum development project, it is useful to know what students know and believe as a basis for selection of curriculum content. The knowledge and attitudes of teachers is important both in terms of assessing the need for in-service education and in determining to what extent prevailing attitudes may aid or hinder the acceptance of the innovation.

The fourth problem area for research is the systematic evaluation of programs which are implemented. Research in this area is difficult as in much educational research because of the time gap between instruction and ultimate behavior patterns of a generation of students. In addition, the time gap permits additional sources of influence to intervene.

These different research areas are within the area of competence of scholars in universities and research institutes. Assistance from research specialists in the settings can be obtained so that a special research unit need not be established for population education.

Another element in the general plan is that of the priority to be given to different sections of the school population. It is clear that content appropriate for all grade levels could be developed. However, a decision must be reached as to whether major attention will be given to particular grade levels. The difficulties in providing meaningful content to primary age students is apparent. However, the drop out rate is such that failure to reach this group in some degree poses a problem.

There is also a question of immediate priorities as against long range plans.

For example, initial attention might be given to secondary students or to middle school students and then at a later date other levels could be included. At the teacher education level, there is the dual task of providing general education to all teachers concerning population issues and the more specific task of preparation of some students for their role as classroom teacher of population education. The preparation of teacher trainers is still another element to be included in the general plan.

Another basic problem is the decision as to whether the content is to be integrated into the current subjects at the various grade levels or taught as separate units or courses at selected grade levels. Educators are generally in agreement that the curriculum is already over-crowded and so a new course at several grades would be possible only if some courses now taught are eliminated or are given a shorter time allocation. This may be possible but it poses serious political problems for educational leaders. One advantage of this approach is that the training of teachers is more easily managed and in addition more systematic development of content is possible.

Most countries are choosing the infusion or integration pattern. This involves a careful review of the existing syllabi to locate the places where concepts may be appropriately introduced in existing instructional units and where new units may be substituted for existing units. The decision concerning the separate courses or infusion is so basic that it should be made at a very early stage.

5. Development of arrangements for keeping informed about population education activities in other countries: It has been emphasized that each country will of necessity have to develop its own approach to population education. However, the experiences of other countries, and particularly those with similar cultural

characteristics may be instructive.

A survey of population education around the world will soon be available from The Population Council. This survey will be repeated from time to time. The regional organization of Ministries of Education in Southeast Asia is another useful mechanism. Special regional conferences may be sponsored from time to time as a means of sharing experiences. The regional office of Unesco in Bangkok is another source of information about activities in those countries in the region. Field representatives of international agencies such as SIDA, The Population Council, The Ford Foundation, the Colombo Plan, and AID may also be of assistance.

6. Determination of financial resources needed and identification of sources of such support: Population education has become an accepted program area for a number of international agencies and resources for the development of programs is readily available. Unesco is encouraging Ministries of Education to submit proposals. The United Nations Fund for Population Activities has committed itself to providing funds for population education either through Unesco or directly to governments.

Bilateral aid is available from the United States Agency for International Development (AID) and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). Private organizations with international programs are also providing assistance in this area. Included in this group are The International Planned Parenthood Federation, The Population Council, and The Ford Foundation.

The strain on national budgets to meet the basic goals of educational systems is clearly recognized and the allocation of extensive funds for curriculum innovation from regular budgets is difficult to obtain. It is in recognition of this difficulty that the UN and other organizations are

prepared to assist in the initial phases of the development of population education. The major costs are those which come in the initial phases of the innovation. When population education has been integrated into the education system, the allocation of special funds will no longer be needed.

Conclusion

Three major points have been considered in this presentation: (1) The need for including population education in the school curriculum; (2) The potential content and scope of population education; and (3) Strategies involved in developing a population education program. No attention has been given to programs for out-of-school youth or for adults. This is not because these groups should be ignored. Population education in the formal school system is explicitly the response of one institution in the nation to the population issue. Other institutions will need to work out the types of responses which are appropriate for them.

Our experience in population education is too limited at this stage to permit a firm assessment of its contribution to the school age population. It is clear however that all countries of the world are facing population problems which are of serious public concern. Since the development of population policies is a task which each country must face now and in the future, the school systems have, at the very least, the responsibility of preparing the next generation for this task. There is also a good basis for believing that a good population program will contribute to the building of a social climate in which individuals will be sensitive to the personal and social consequences of their reproductive behavior.